



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
One Credit Union Place, Suite 340  
Harrisburg, PA 1700-2993

---

June 13, 2008

GENERAL MANUAL  
PA 180-CPA  
Amendment No. 2 (Part 409)

SUBJECT CPA—CERTIFIED CONSERVATION PLANNER

Purpose: To amend Pennsylvania's policy for becoming a Certified Conservation Planner.

Effective Date: This Amendment is effective when received.

Background: 180-GM PA AMENDMENT NO. 1, SEPTEMBER 2007 amended the continuing education requirements for Certified Conservation Planners to simplify obtaining and tracking continuing education credits. The amendment lists acceptable training events by categories meeting the continuing education requirements. It also provides for courses to be approved by the State Resource Conservationist (SRC). Courses must be four hours long to be acceptable. Since the use of the Internet provides for delivery of more cost effective training than face to face delivery of appropriate topics, the Certified Conservation Planner Policy has again been revised. While topics that are knowledge based are suitable for delivery through a presentation over the Internet competency development should be promoted in a class or workshop setting.

Explanation of change: Employees will be notified of the availability of Internet based knowledge courses that are approved by the SRC. The accumulation of four hours of approved Internet based courses in a category will be accepted as equivalent to attending a course listed in the same category. Employees participating in an Internet course and their supervisor will be notified that their participation has been verified. The employee should document all training on their Individual Development Plan (IDP) to record meeting the continuing education requirement for maintaining Certified Conservation Planner status.

/s/

CRAIG R. DERICKSON  
State Conservationist

DIST: CPM Holders



Title 180 - Conservation Planning and Application  
PART 409 - Conservation Planning Policy

CONTENTTS

Part 409 – Conservation Planning Policy

Sec.

482.1 Purpose

482.2 Background

482.3 Policy

482.1 Purpose

To amend Pennsylvania's supplement to GM-180 PART 409.9 Minimum Criteria to Achieve a NRCS Certified Conservation Planner Designation.

482.2 Background

Policy has been revised to change Continuing Education Components.

482.3 Policy

(a) Certification Process

- (1) Candidates must have a minimum of three years experience in the field of Resources Conservation and Planning or the equivalent of a similarly approved field.
- (2) The candidate must have the approval and or recommendation of the District Conservationist from the field office or area where they intend to write plans in order to attend Module 6-8 training.
- (3) The candidate must have successfully completed the prerequisite courses before applying to attend Modules 6-8 training.
  - i. Introduction to Water Quality
  - ii. Ag Waste Management Systems
  - iii. Conservation Planning Modules 1-5
  - iv. Cultural Resource Modules 1-8
  - v. Proficient experience in Practice Standards: 328, 329, 330, 340, 345, 362, 412, 528, 585, 590, 600
  - vi. ACT 6/RUSLE/Storm Water 2-day course
- (4) Upon completion of Modules 6-8 training, the candidate must submit Module 9, which requires development of an RMS level plan that addresses all quality criteria

identified. At a minimum, the plan must include the land uses: cropland, pasture, and farmstead. Submittal of multiple plans may be required for certification. After the plan is completed, it must be submitted for review by the Conservation Plan Reviewer on the State Resource Conservationist's staff.

- (5) The area District Conservationist should be familiar with how the candidate manages the following tasks: fieldwork with producers, collection of correct field information, and the accurate processing of information to develop a conservation plan. If the DC is not familiar with the candidate's ability to gather field data, the candidate must request a NRCS field person to accompany them and observe their abilities. The Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations will designate the NRCS field employee.
- (6) If no issues are presented to prohibit the candidate from becoming a Certified Conservation Planner, the State Conservationist will grant certified conservation planning status for a period of three years.

(b) Ethics

- (1) All individuals certified as Conservation Planners are bound by a code of ethics.
  - i. The privilege of professional practice imposes obligations of responsibility as well as professional knowledge in assisting landowners with conservation planning decisions to protect or improve natural resources. The Pennsylvania Certified Conservation Planning program certifies the credentials of individuals through Pennsylvania USDA, NRCS.
  - ii. Pennsylvania USDA, NRCS will grant certification to individuals who meet the experience, training, testing, and continuing education requirements of the state Certified Conservation Planning program (CCP program).
  - iii. A certified planner, at the request of a client or employer, must disclose the information used to gain certification. Registrants who knowingly misrepresent their credentials will face disciplinary action.
  - iv. A certified planner who finds obligations to their employer or client conflict with their professional obligation or ethics of certification to write conservation plans should work to correct objectionable conditions.
  - v. A certified planner shall not use, directly or indirectly, employer or clients' information in any way that would violate their confidentiality.

- vi. A certified planner shall engage, or advise employer or client to engage and cooperate with other experts and specialists as appropriate for development of the conservation plan.
- vii. A certified planner protects the interests of a client by recommending conservation practices, products, and services that are in the best interest of the client, the public, and the natural resources.
- viii. A certified planner protects the interests of a client by recommending conservation practices, products, and services that are in the best interest of the client, the public and the natural resources.
- ix. A certified planner shall not use the advantage of public employment, such as university or government to compete unfairly with other certified professionals.
- x. A certified planner shall endeavor to cooperate with others in the profession and encourage the ethical dissemination of technical knowledge to promote sound conservation planning for protection of natural resources.
- xi. A certified planner shall uphold this Code of Ethics by precept and example and encourage, by counsel and advice, other candidates to do the same. Conservation plans shall be developed in adherence with the Pennsylvania State Planning Policy and Procedures handbook.
- xii. A certified planner having positive knowledge of deviation from the Code by another Certified Conservation Planner shall bring such deviation to the attention of the State Conservationist or their appointed representative.
- xiii. A certified planner shall base planning decisions and recommendations upon proper evaluation of Quality Criteria and sound technical knowledge that will protect and enhance the natural resources.
- xiv. A Certified Conservation Planner shall utilize tools in an appropriate manner, if flaws or malfunctions are detected, sound technical planning to protect the natural resources shall prevail. Flaws and problems with tools shall be reported to the proper person immediately.

(c) Continuing Education

- (1) The Continuing Education Program exists to ensure adequate knowledge is obtained equally for planning all land uses addressed by NRCS. Employees should obtain the training needed to develop the required knowledge and competencies to perform their job.

- (2) One item from each of the following categories is required every three years.
- (3) Categories i thru iv are mandatory.
- (4) Items in the Optional category could be included on a case by case basis with input from supervisors. This could involve employees that want to specialize in certain areas or where Field Teams need someone with unique expertise.
- (5) Other course substitutions and optional training may be available with prior approval of the SRC
- (6) A day of training must contain a minimum of four hours of instruction. The accumulation of four hours of prior approved Internet based courses in a category will be accepted as equivalent to attending a course listed in the same category.

### **Approved Courses by Category:**

- (i) No-Till/Cover Crop
    - a. Advanced No-Till Training
    - b. Professional Crop Producers Conference
    - c. Keystone Crop and Soils Conference
    - d. National/Regional No-Till Conference
    - e. PSU Diagnostic Clinic
  - (ii) Nutrient Management
    - a. Nutrient Management Plan Writing
    - b. PDA/SCC Administrative and Technical Update Meeting
    - c. Nutrient Management for Pastures Training
  - (iii) Grazing
    - a. Animal Concentration Area Training
    - b. Annual Grazing Conference
  - (iv) Wildlife and Buffers
    - a. Stroud Center Field Day
    - b. Wildlife Considerations in Conservation Planning
    - c. Interagency Wetland Awareness Training
  - (v) Optional
    - a. Air Quality
    - b. Energy
    - c. IPM
- (7) Each Certified Conservation Planner will be supplied with a training tracker for completion of the training credits. This document is also available with the 457/401 Soil Conservationist Individual Development Plans located on the Pennsylvania Employee Intranet at:  
[http://www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/employee\\_development/index.html](http://www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/employee_development/index.html)  
 It is the responsibility of the Certified Conservation Planner to maintain this record and submit a copy with another Module 9 when applying for re-certification.